公爵令嬢の嗜み

2

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カドカワBOOKS

Common Sense of a Duke's Daughter

(公爵令嬢の嗜み)

Volume 02

Reia

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Story Description:

I was reincarnated as a daughter of a Duke. However, when I regained my memory, I had already reached the "ending."

My engagement had been discarded and if things goes according to its "course," it was set that I will be imprisoned by the church.

Where is my bright future?

Original Story can be found here: Link

Chapter 32: Discovery

"...And they live happily ever after. We'll stop today's story-telling here."

When I closed the open book, the children all had dissatisfied expressions and announced,

"Eh~, more, more!"

"Please read this picture book next."

Ah, I'm being healed. Surely if one was to look at my expression now, they will think that I can't endure it any longer.

I am currently holding myself back from reading some more.

"I'm really sorry. I must truly head home for today. I will definitely come some other time, so please forgive me."

"Eh~..."

"When will you come?"

After hearing the lonely tone of the children's voices I almost wanted to say, if possible I want to stay here forever...

"Although I do not know when, but I'll definitely return. Okay? I promise you."

"I understand~"

"...When you come back next time, please read the picture book."

"Yes, of course."

After I said goodbye to the children, I headed inside the orphanage and greeted Mina-sensei.

...Haaa~ I don't want to return.

When I retire sometime in the future, I wondered if I should work at the orphanage... Or rather, I've been seriously considering it.

Marriage... That hope has been destroyed the moment my engagement with a royal family member was annulled. Because that happened, my

marriage ended up nothing but a destroyed dream.

Sometime in the future, I will have to retire from managing the conglomerate and the fief. When that time comes, I want to live quietly while being surrounded by children... that's how I feel.

I am really being healed. ...Since there's no foolproof way on how to raise a child, I'm sure that troubles will occur here and there, however... as of now, I don't believe there will come a time where my feelings about this will cool off.

Advantageous and disadvantageous connections, strategy... not to mention in the conglomerate, but there is always these shadows in fief politics. The number one thing that the country uses during exchanges are the fiefs.

Because I am no gentleman with a high ranking, I never want others to say that I cannot see what's important and protect it. At times, there are things that must be cut down and I have to play the role of a demon, harden my heart, and cut those down. And things that can still be used must be used.

I must protect the people living in our fief, my precious parents, grandparents, people who are important to me and those who are willing to work with me, at all cost.

However, even if it's me, there are times when I get tired. Rather than my body, it's my heart and mind. What was it that I read in a book... Kings are always lonely.

Although I am not a King, the future of the people can change based on my final decision... No matter what, it is my responsibility.

When I think about those things, as I thought, it is heavy.

Because I decided to undertake this on my own, I will do everything I am capable of doing... That being said, I will also grow old eventually, and it will be impossible for me to continue then, thus I must find someone suitable to replace me.

When that time comes, I thought I will live quietly surrounded by

children... Oh my, I wonder if I was being too impatient.

Well, in order to achieve a peaceful future, I must work at it right now.

It has been half a year since grandfather departed from the Duke of Armelia's fief. Berne and the Second Prince has successfully graduated from school.

Right now, Berne is studying under father. The rest of the group are also studying under their individual parents. This means that Ed-sama is also studying his duties in the castle. He has yet to be officially married to Yuri-sama. As to when it will happen, they have yet to make an announcement, but it will probably be soon.

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After I returned home, I immediately headed to the study. First, I will take a look at documents concerning the conglomerate, and the fief government afterward.

"Welcome home, young mistress."

With that timing, the person who entered was Dean. After I collapsed that time, I stopped leisurely going out to town with just Dean and I. Our day offs are on a separate day, in case something happens, we'll be able to support each other.

"I'm back, Dean. Although it's sudden, please give me a report."

"Yes. ...As expected, the import and export have increased after the ease on the taxes. In addition, it looks like the profits of the conglomerates and companies have increased."

Since that time, we switched from poll taxes to income taxes to lessen the taxes needed to be paid. Although there was a lot of confusion when it was still at its introductory stage, it has settled down little by little.

Now then, just to recap where the Duke of Armelia's fief is, it is southeast of the Royal City, and the area it covers is quite large. The climate is eternal spring... and a part of the south is tropical. The east faces the sea, and there are some ports there.

I believe that the Duke of Armelia's fief is blessed with a good location. The climate is warm, and there is a port town. There is a sea that separates other countries from it, although there's a risk during war-time, but right now, it brings in large profits.

In addition, northwest of the Royal City, without a body of water to separate the land, lies the Kingdom which is famous for warfare, the Towair Kingdom. Thus, compared to that place, this is better.

Returning to the story, there is a port town in our fief, and because of that, trade is taking place there more than ever. When I had just received the position of being the fief Lord's proxy, I went to investigate the east where the tax revenue is large, and the reason was because of the port town.

Presently, because of the ease of taxes, trade with other countries has increased. With the previous taxes, not only were the people in the fief not doing enough trade with other countries, they suffered from trading with other towns within the fief. The taxes on exportation has been abolished and decreased the taxes on import. In the future, we will do an occasional tax rate review based on the product item.

In any case, because the taxes has lessened, the quantity of the import and export goods coming and going to other fief and countries as increased.

Because of that, with the conglomerates and companies are gaining more profits based on the goods they handle, next would be the income tax of the conglomerates... We will be separating the income taxes of the conglomerates and their presidents... Well, that's something I'm looking forward to.

...Azura Conglomerate has also started to import and export to other countries, so our profits are increasing little by little.

Now then, when the distribution increased, I discovered something interesting. That is silk.

In my previous world, if I'm not mistaken, silk was introduced in Europe during the Middle Ages*, and it was popular among the upper class... But

for some reason, there is still no silk in this Kingdom.

[T/N: Middle Ages span from 5th to 15th centuries. Silk was introduced to Europe, Italy, in the 13th century after the Second Crusades. For more information, please search for "Silk Road."]

The mainstream here is linen, wool, and cotton. I found it interesting that although cotton has been distribution, silk, on the other hand, is not available... That's what I first thought, but when trade had increased, I recently discovered it.

Although I do know that farming silkworms are one way to produce them, and I want the Armelia fief to make it a locality, but honestly, I do not know what silk is made out of and the process of making it so it will require a large amount of time. Because of that, when the tax revenue of the fief has settled down, let's do some trial and error sometime in the future to make.

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Translator's Message

Cat was caught in the clutches of the younger sister's evil friend who just happened to like reading Duke's Daughter and was bribed with two boxes of White Chocolate Macadamia Nut Cookies.

That said, let's start Volume 2 with a bang, shall we? There will be a total of 5 chapters today. And no, my fingers didn't slip from the number 2 on my number keypad. Hehehe.

Also, I would like to take this time to thank the people who donated to the Japan Relief Fund and requested for Duke's Daughter. These chapters are for you guys!

Thank you to: Kirindas, JC, CU, PW, HL, MK, TD, and other people who wish to remain Anonymous. Thank you for your generosity.

Chapter 33: Now, to the Royal City

"...Why was something like this sent to me..."

The thing I presently held in my hand was an invitation. ...It is an invitation to a party held in the Royal Castle to celebrate the founding of the Kingdom.

Because it is an official event, it is usually attended by everyone, especially those who are making a debut. That's right, if it is the usual.

However, I have been banished from society, and ever since I have been expelled from the academy, I have never received an invitation. Nevertheless, that is only natural, or rather, it is bizarre for me to even receive one.

"...However, young mistress. The invitation to this party came from the royal family. You cannot turn it down so bluntly."

Although Sebastian said that, he was also looking at the invitation with suspicious eyes.

"You're right. ...I should prepare myself for the worst."

"You don't have to worry about the fief. It's just nice that Dean will be here, and if anything happens, I will immediately dispatch a messenger."

"Yes. Sebastian, I'm counting on you."

*

Several days after that, I left the fief for the first time in a long while and headed towards the house in the Royal City. It's been almost three years since I left the Royal City, and because it's has been so long, I don't have any deep impressions of it.

"Welcome home, young mistress."

All the servants gathered and greeted me at the same time. And the person at the very front was the head maid, Rimé.

"It's been a long time, Rimé"

“Yes. To finally be able to meet the young mistress again, there is no greater joy than this.”

“You’re being too exaggerated.”

Then, I walked passed the servants who had lined up and headed further inside.

“...It’s been a long time.”

“Welcome home, Iris-chan.”

Inside, my parents and my younger brother were waiting.

“It’s been a long time. Father, mother, Berne.”

“Above all, it’s good that you’re in good health. It’ll be good if you spend your time here leisurely.”

My normally strict father unexpectedly displayed a soft expression. With just that alone, I felt slightly pleased.

“Yes, please allow me to do so.”

“More than anything, I heard from Sei that there will be another new product? I’m looking forward to it.”

“The preparation to commercialize it is not yet completed. However, I will be doing a trial run of the product during the upcoming party, so please look forward to it.”

“Weellll~ Later please show it to me in secret? Can you?”

“Please look forward to seeing it tomorrow.”

When I said that, she sported a slightly disappointed expression and consented anyway.

“Older sister... Will you really be attending tomorrow’s party?”

“It can’t be helped. Since I received an invitation from the royal family.”

“...However, Ed-sama and Yuri-sama will be attending for sure.”

I was surprised when I heard Berne’s words, and my eyes unintentionally widened in wonder.

"...I was surprised."

"About what?"

"The fact that you're actually worrying about me."

After I said what I was thinking, Berne's face darkens a little.

"That is... It is certainly normal for you to think that it's a little late for me to worry about you, but..."

"Not at all. Thank you."

After that, I went to my room to relax. The last time I was here, I was really nervous thinking about how my negotiations with father will turn out, and after the meeting with him, I was so busy with various preparations that I do not have much memory of this room. That's why it feels a little nostalgic.

While I was relaxing like that, Rimé came to the room.

"...Young mistress, the Master is calling for you."

"Hmmm, father is... I will go to him immediately."

When I entered the room, father was sitting on a chair surrounded by lots of documents. ...Somehow, I see my own appearance in him.

"...So you came."

"Yes. Please excuse me."

"...It seems like the fief has been doing well lately."

"It's doing passably."

"Don't be too modest. ...Well, I guess that's fine. That aside, I'm really sorry about this time."

"When you said 'this time,' are you talking about the party?"

"Yeah. Although Melly and I tried to investigate it... the insiders insisted that the invitation came from a member of the royal family."

"I wonder what they are intending in making me attend? It's not as though there's any merit."

“Or rather, it’s because it will be difficult for you. The aristocrats will be strict on someone who has once been banished from society.”

“Well, if it’s about that, I’ve already prepared myself. It is a situation which I cannot run away from, so there’s no helping it.”

“On that appointed day, there’s a high chance that the King will not make an appearance.”

“Although it’s the party to celebrate the founding of the Kingdom, the King might not attend? Did something happen?”

I mean, it’s the party to celebrate the founding of the Kingdom, right? So unless something compelling happened, the King will definitely be there.

“...About half a year ago, the King collapsed.”

“No way...”

After feeling like I was hit by a massive weight, I instinctively heaved a sigh. With this timing, and for the King to be absent. No matter how one looks at it, the chaos in this Kingdom will intensify.

“Although he collapsed, I can’t say that his illness was serious. However, as of now, if one just looks at him, one can immediately tell that his health is gradually deteriorating. The party tomorrow will most likely be the trigger to set this Kingdom off.”

Well, that’s probably how it’ll be. If the King is absent, no matter who it is, they’ll find it suspicious. And in no time at all, rumors will start to spread.

“Since that is the case, a daughter of a Duke will probably become one of the main topics. During tomorrow’s party, my existence will probably be in the limelight. As for me, I really want to quickly return to the fief and resume my normal life.”

“Ah, that’s right...”

“Father, although you probably have a lot of work left to do before tomorrow’s party, but please take care of your body.”

“You as well. I also heard about. Didn’t you already collapse once?”

“Only for one day. But after that, I’ve always remembered to relax.”

“Is that so. When it comes to work, the body is the basis. ...You as well, make sure you don’t overwork yourself.”

“Yes. Thank you very much.”

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...The next day, because the weather was beautiful, I decided to do yoga in the garden. Although it seems like Tanya has given up on the idea of asking me to stop wearing linen T-shirts and tights early in the morning, she probably didn’t think that I would wear it outside. And when she saw me, she panicked.

...I’m so sorry, Tanya. However, it is warm in the Royal City, and the weather is fine, so I instinctively did it.

Mother found with at the same time as Tanya. When she saw me, she seemed to have gotten interested in yoga and made me promise to teach her tomorrow morning.

Since the party will take place tonight, I should probably start making my preparations.

I took a shower and began my preparation. After I got dressed with help from Tanya, she also took responsibility to do my hair and make-up.

By the way... The trial product, this time, is a dress. This dress has been tailored with the recently discovered silk. As expected, silk... has splendid luster. Earlier, Tanya was also looking at the dress absentmindedly.

...Now then, preparation is perfect. Spirit is also adequate. Thus, shall we head off to the battlefield?

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Translator’s Message

The King has collapsed, and I’m guessing Iris’ father thinks that she will be used as a diversion?

Chapter 34: A Certain Aristocrat's Observation

...Today is the founding day, and all the aristocrats will gather at the Royal Castle for a party held by the royal family. As the head of an Earl's House, I've also been invited to this party.

Every single person who entered the venue were dressed beautifully, following the dress code of an official function. Of course, I, as well, was dressed in clothing I had specially tailored for this occasion.

Suddenly, the hall became noisy. ...It seems that Edward-sama, Yuri-sama, and the son of the Pope of the Darryl church, Van-sama, has arrived.

Edward-sama came dressed in a splendidly deep green suit. Next to him... Yuri-sama, who entered the hall with her hand linked with Edward-sama, is wearing a pink dress. With flowers sewed on the upper portion of her dress here and there, it splendidly enhances her youthfulness.

Her skirt puffs up like a pannier skirt, with a slit on the side. There were also white lace and something pale pink underneath it, and one could catch a glimpse of them whenever she moves.

Van-sama on the other hand, as someone part of the Darryl church, was wearing Darryl church's formal dress.

When they appeared, the people in the hall went to them in order to greet them one after another. Because a member of the royal family showed up, it was only natural.

...However, there were also people who just watched them from afar. Their actions are acceptable due to the present unstable situation. For the time being, I did not go to greet him either, but if he comes near me, I'll greet him then.

Even so... Edward-sama didn't come here as a sponsor but as an attendant. Surely, even though he has yet to ascend the throne, he has been pressured to do so by Ellia-sama and her House. Well, since the

person in question is conversing with Yuri-sama normally, he might not mind it at all.

While I was thinking that, the surrounding became as rowdy as the time Edward-sama made his appearance. The people who arrived is the Duke of Armelia and the Prime Minister, Louis-sama, and his wife, Mellice-sama.

As usual, Mellice-sama looks beautiful. Today, she was dressed in the height of fashion, matching her light blue eyes... a dark blue gown. Really, as expected of someone who was given the title of "The Flower of Society," she is beautiful.

Regardless if it was a man or a woman, they went to greet the couple. The two of them were most likely already used to it and tactfully returned the greetings.

Soon after, the surrounding of the entrance of the hall became even more rowdy. I, as well, directed my line of sight away from the Duke and Duchess.

At that place, was the Duke's son, Berne Tash Armelia, and the girl he was escorting. That girl attracted the eyes of all the people in the hall. Similarly, I was also one of the people who was admiring her.

...Beautiful. That word occupied my entire head. She had silver glossy hair that seems to shine even more under the light. She has well sculpted facial features, and skin as white as porcelain. With deep blue eyes, similar to the finest sapphire.

And the dress she was wearing was glossy in addition to having some kind of luster... I wonder what kind of cloth it's made out of. At the very least, I have never seen such fabric before.

And that thin beige dress tailored from that kind of fabric, is a dress completely of a different style from all the dresses found in this place. First of all, the dress has no puffy sleeves, and rather than being in a form of an hourglass, it is shaped with like a curved line similar to the letter "S"... In addition, rather than having a skirt with volume, it has a refreshing looking narrow skirt.

With her slender figure, the dress suited her really well. And the skirt was finished with an elaborate embroidery done with blue and silver thread. And to polish her look, she had a deep blue sash, similar to the color of her eyes.

She seems to illuminate under the lights, and with her delicate frame... she looked like the Goddess of the Moon. Holding that sort of impression, I couldn't separate my eyes from her.

...Exactly who in the world is that girl? Such a beautiful woman, I would never forget her after seeing her once.

While bathing in the eyes of the people in the hall, she walked deep into the hall. And then, she stopped right in front of the Duke and Duchess of Armelia and started a conversation.

...Is she someone from the Duke of Armelia's House...? Now that I think about it, her appearance looks really similar to Mellice-sama...

Impossible, is she really Iris Lana Armelia-sama, the daughter of Duke Armelia? No, the difference in appearance is too excessive... In addition, after her engagement with Edward-sama was annulled, she should not be able to attend any parties. If that's so, then...?

While I was thinking of that question inside my head, another door opened. The person who arrived was the Queen Dowager... Queen Dowager? Not the King but the Queen Dowager...? But at the time when the organizer made an appearance, I suddenly remembered something.

Before the King rose to the throne, she was once the Queen who dominated this Kingdom. This was because when her elder brother, the Crown Prince, died, she became the only direct descendant of the royal family. However, because it was unprecedented for a woman to take the throne, she married a Duke and had him assume the role of the King.

During that era, rather than the King, it was the Queen who appeared time and time again and acted as the organizer. Therefore, I feel nostalgic looking at the current spectacle.

When the previous King, her husband, passed away and her son, the

present King, rose to the throne, and she quickly backed away.

And when the King married and the Earl's daughter, the Queen then became the Queen Dowager and retired to the Queen Dowager's palace.

Since then, she hasn't been participating much in these kinds of events... Really, I wonder if something happened.

Naturally, there were others who remembered the past and lowered their heads. I was also one of those people.

She accepted our greetings with a smile and sat at the seat reserved for the royal family. At the same time, the music started playing and the party began.

For some reason, the Queen Dowager was looking at the mystery woman Berne-sama brought, who was currently engrossed in a conversation.

Suddenly, the mysterious woman began to move. Apparently, she was called by the Queen Dowager. When she was in the vicinity of where the Queen Dowager was sitting, all of us had already forgotten our own conversations and perked our ears to listen to theirs.

"The Duke of Armelia's daughter, Iris Lana Armelia. I have been looking forward to the day I finally meet you. And thus, I have invited you to today's party."

When we heard the Queen Dowager's words, a shock ran through us. As I thought, she was the eldest child of the Duke of Armelia, "the woman" involved in that event...

To think that it was the Queen Dowager who had personally invited her, we couldn't hide our surprise.

What in the world was the Queen Dowager thinking about...

"You have achieved spectacular success as the President of Azura Conglomerate, and I've also heard about the splendid work you have done in managing the fief as the fief Lord's proxy. I hope you enjoy yourself today."

When the Queen Dowager said those words, all of us received an even greater blow.

She was the person who is operating “that” Azura Conglomerate? In addition, she was managing the fief as the fief Lord’s proxy!

Speaking of Azura Conglomerate, it is a popular conglomerate in the Kingdom, large enough to fight over the first or second spot.

Although it has only been recently established, not even three years old... nevertheless, with conglomerate’s excellent management and unprecedented product line-up, they quickly gained attention. Their chocolate products is a great favorite of mine, and my family is using their beauty products.

“...If you’re troubled with anything, please feel free to consult with me, anything is fine.”

“...It is my great honor.”

With beautiful movements, she expressed her gratitude and withdrew. Although only three to four sentences were said during the conversation, because the organizer must talk with various other people, this was only natural.

When she withdrew, the next person was called.

She once again returned to being a wallflower. The person probably wanted to remain inconspicuous... however, everyone was glancing at her.

With just that exchange alone, everyone was aware that her value had become immeasurable.

First of all, her appeal of being the President of Azura Conglomerate. With ample funds and assets, she is an existence that can’t be ignored.

However, above all... she has the support of the Queen Dowager. She was summoned by the noblest of all nobles in the Kingdom, and she was asked to consult with the Queen Dowager about any matter. The royal family... to receive the backing of the person with the most influence in a place like this is an honor.

Now that it has come to this, why did Edward-sama annulled his engagement with her... After all, with her beautiful appearance, talent, lineage, and backing... No matter how one looks at it, she's attractive.

Or rather, if he really wants to ascend the throne, she is someone he would want to draw in. To actually ignore the lady, annulled his engagement with her, and immediately get engaged to another girl, if anything, it was too malicious.

At the very least, the neutral people will sneer in secret while the First Prince faction will probably gloat about this. And the people in the Second Prince's faction, after having let go of such a big fish, I guess they would probably end up gritting their teeth.

Right now, everyone wants to get acquainted with her and were looking for the perfect timing to do so. However, she is always in a conversation with one of her family members, and because of that, it's hard to find the right timing.

"Huh, it's been a long time, hasn't it~"

While the others were thinking of strategies, a girl who couldn't read the atmosphere made such remarks.

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Translator's Message

Second Prince's faction, continue to grit your teeth in regret! But before you do, let me grab some popcorn~

Can you guys guess who's the girl who can't read the atmosphere?

Chapter 35: Assistance of the Queen Dowager

Right now, I am in the middle of a mayhem.

...It is currently the party to commemorate the founding of the Kingdom. I thought it was strange for me to be invited, and when I arrived at the venue, I resolved myself and entered the place.

However, when I entered, rather than receiving cold gazes from the people, they looked at me with curiosity and interest. At this time, I thought, "Huh? It is different from what I had been expecting..."

And when I received a summon from the Queen Dowager, I didn't think that she would say kind words and give me her support. Huh? Could it be that the person who invited me was the Queen Dowager... that's what I believed.

Since my mission for today has ended, I heaved a sigh and calmly walked to a corner.

However, I didn't think that Yuri-sama would appear right in front of me. ...In addition, standing next to her was the grumpy looking Ed-sama, and Van-sama who was looking at me curiously.

"...It's been a long time."

For the time being, I replied with a smile. ...It doesn't look stiff, does it?

"Iris-sama, it's been a long time since you have not attended the academy~ I'm glad to see that you're looking energetic~"

Huh, sarcasm? Was that sarcasm? Or is she simply saying that because she's worried about me? Since the opponent is Yuri-sama, I hesitate to make any judgment...

"It is a good thing that Yuri-sama is also looking well."

For the time being, I made a harmless remark.

"...I'm surprised. To think that it's actually Iris-sama."

Van-sama who was standing on the side made a comment.

“Didn’t I tell you so? I’m really good at distinguishing a person’s face. In addition, she’s together with Berne, so I thought she’s definitely Iris-sama.”

Yuri-sama said proudly... even though she was at that place when it all happened. Together with Berne, you were there driving me out with all your might!

Even so, you’ve changed too much. I didn’t notice at all.”

“Yuri is really smart.”

“Fufufu... Thank you very much, Edward-sama.”

....Yes, yes. As usual, you guys are surrounded with “kyakya ufufufu” pink atmosphere. To actually act that way in front of your previous fiancee, you really lack consideration.

On the other hand, I’ve already given up a lot of things to Yuri-sama... Besides, I wonder if Edward-sama has always been this happy? While I was wondering that, a doubt immediately arose within me after remembering the last words I said at the academy.

“...By the way, why is Iris-sama making an appearance here today~?”

I didn’t expect a sudden punch from Yuri-sama, and within a moment, the smile on my face disappeared.

“Why, you ask...?”

“Because Iris-sama...”

“There’s no need for you to ask her why she’s asking you that question. Because you do not have any position to make an appearance at this place.”

Interrupting what Yuri-sama was saying, Edward-sama said while looking at me with hatred. Even if you don’t glare at me that much, it’s not as though I would eat her.

“No position...”

“It’s because Yuri is gentle. She’s giving you a piece of advice to remind you of your position.”

Or rather, listen to the other person’s story first! In addition, why are you being so boastful?

“...Advice?”

On the other hand, Yuri-sama doesn’t seem to understand what Ed-sama said and a question mark appeared on top of her head.

“...The reason I am in this place is because I received an invitation from the Queen Dowager. With or without any position, it is my duty, as a subject, to play my part.”

“Wha...! Grandmother did...?”

Ed-sama looked really surprised and his eyes widened. Were you not paying any attention when I went to greet the Queen Dowager a little while ago?

“No, that’s impossible... To someone as inhumane as you, there’s no way grandmother will send you an invitation. If you want to tell a lie, make it a little more believable.”

Although you are not convinced... those words are not something you should say to someone who you were once engaged with... When I was about to say something, Yuri-sama said something before me.

“...Umm~ What have you two people been talking about? I don’t really understand it~...”

“...Haaa...”

With Yuri-sama’s words, his anger immediately lessened. You don’t understand it well? It was you who brought up this topic in the first place.

“About the thing I wanted to ask~... Why Iris-sama came here in person... Is it because Iris-sama wants to advertise that dress today~ At least that’s what I was thinking~”

“...Advertisement?”

“Yes~ Because Iris-sama is someone from the Duke of Armelia’s House, right? If you think about the Duke of Armelia’s fief, then Azura Conglomerate will naturally come to mind. What I wanted to hear is if Iris-sama was asked by the Azura Conglomerate to wear that dress and come here to advertise.”

I wasn’t asked to do it or anything, after all, I am the President of Azura Conglomerate. As I thought, they didn’t know that I am the president of that conglomerate... Then, I remembered the chaos that occurred when I was talking to Sei and was told that these two people wanted to apply to become members.

“No... I wasn’t asked to advertise it or anything... but it is the truth that fabric used for this dress will be introduced as a new commodity.”

“Oh, as I thought~! It’s really beautiful. I would also want to have a dress tailored in this fabric. Where can I buy it?”

Leaving Ed-sama aside, Yuri-sama advances her conversation with me.

“Because we have yet to gather a lot of materials, it is currently not up for sale. But we’ll have enough materials soon enough, and a product line will be launched soon after.”

“Oh, is that so~ Because it looks really wonderful, I want one by all means... That’s what I was thinking. Is there anything you can do?”

“Although I am glad about your praise... however, we really do need more time, so pardon us.”

After all, it is being exported from another country, so the price is quite high. I thought that it can’t be helped since it’s silk, but thinking about the costs such as transportation, there’s a deficit.

Because of that, it doesn’t look like the conglomerate will be able to market it on a large scale... Even if we were to sell it at a high price, there’s not enough fabric. This time, I only made this dress because it was necessary.

“Eh~... But...”

“Th-that’s right. Yuri who will soon become a member of the royal family wishes it. It will be an honor for the conglomerate, and it’s their duty to immediately fulfill it.”

“Even if you say so, what’s impossible is impossible.”

“I-impenitent...!”

Ed-sama said with his face bright red. Fortunately, most people didn’t seem to hear our conversation because they were involved in conversations of their own, and also thanks to the music orchestral playing... Nevertheless, the people who were just nearby heard everything. Ah, how troublesome.

“...It’s really rowdy, isn’t it. What is going on?”

Mother suddenly appeared behind me.

“Ah, Duchess of Armelia. It’s been a long time~”

“...”

Splendidly ignoring Yuri-sama’s greeting, she walked towards me.

“Are you alright?”

“Eh... I’m doing fine, mother. To cause such a racket, I’m really sorry to worry you.”

“Duchess of Armelia!”

With the same tone as earlier, Ed-sama called out to my mother. Ah, a wrinkle suddenly appeared in the middle of mother’s forehead.

“Oh, Your Highness. Why are you speaking in such a loud voice in the middle of a party?”

“Under this circumstances... Why did you disregard Yuri! This is a blasphemy against the royal family.”

“Well, Your Highness. Surely you jest. ...I’m certain you haven’t forgotten the manners of the court, have you?”

Mother unfolded her fan and covered her mouth with it. On the other side of her fan, I’m sure she’s blowing a big sigh.

“For a person who has a lower social position to carefreely address a person of higher social standing, the people in the surrounding will question the fineness of that person. If Yuri-sama is to become your princess… No, because of this reason, she should be well informed of such manners.”

Mother quietly looked at Ed-sama and Yuri-sama’s appearance.

“However, Yuri is the person who is engaged to me.”

“Yes, that she is. Although she’s someone you are engaged to, it doesn’t mean you have been formally married… In other words, she is not part of your House. Until then, her position will stay the same. …Before you get married, no one knows what will happen until then.”

Mother suddenly glanced towards me. Yes, that’s right. It is the truth that I had my engagement annulled.

“I don’t think social status is related. When someone greets you, you should return the greeting. Isn’t this the most natural thing to do~?”

“…”

Mother and I… No, everyone in the surroundings was dumbfounded. No, Ed-sama and Van-sama were not stunned at all.

A natural thing… to do. To say such things in a world of aristocrats where manners and formalities are essential is a serious offense. With the King on the top, the rest of the aristocrats are under him in a shape of a pyramid.

In Japan, it is proprietary to greet people and return the greeting of someone else. However, there are various ways and manners to greet and return a greeting, and that identically exists in this world.

“Yuri-sama. As someone who might become a member of the royal family, you need to learn how to conduct yourself.”

“It is as Mellice says.”

I thought that a new person is making an appearance, I didn’t think that it would be the Queen Dowager.

“Grandmother...!?”

“Queen Dowager, is it fine for you to leave your seat and come here?”

While Ed-sama was surprised that she made an appearance, mother, on the other hand, inquired nonchalantly.

“It’s fine. The greetings have pretty much ended. That said, Iris. Let’s go over there, and please let me hear the story of what you have been up to recently. Mellice, will you be coming as well?”

“Yes, I will come.”

“Is that so. The Duke of Armelia and the Marquis of Anderson are already there waiting for you. Please be my conversational partner.”

“Certainly.”

“Since you’ll be the only one left here, Berne, come with us to where the Duke of Armelia is.”

“Yes.”

When we were about to take our leave, Ed-sama once again called out.

“Grandmother...!”

“What is it? You’re being too rowdy. ...In this party, there are also people from other countries in attendance, so what’s with your awful state. You people, retire and cool your heads. Because with your appearance, the fineness of our Kingdom will be questioned.”

However, the Queen Dowager treated him coldly, and walked away, leading the four of us. The passing attendees looked at the expression on the faces of Ed-sama and the others... However, Ed-sama and Yuri-sama stood there with a blank surprise.

After that, the Queen Dowager returned to the seat reserved for the royal family. The people around her were people with high social status and distinguished guests from other countries, such as grandfather who is considered this Kingdom’s strongest military general, and important key figures involved in the Royal Court, and this impressive gathering of eminent and powerful members were smiling and laughing.

For these members to attend this party held by the Queen Dowager shows that even until now, the Queen Dowager's influence is still as powerful as ever.

I wonder if it's good that I came... that's what I was thinking. Because I didn't want to be at that place, I quietly stayed beside the Queen Dowager and conversed with her.

*

Translator's Message

Popcorns are yummy, you guys should get some.

All hail Mellice! All hail the Queen Dowager!

Chapter 36: Various Speculations II

"...I guess his status has dropped."

I spoke of the details of the party that happened the other day with Alfred who is currently in front of me. However, because it's been a long time since I made an appearance at a party, I was really tired.

"If Ellia and her maternal house also made a move, I think it would have been more interesting. However, Ellia was busy greeting other aristocrats... She was too absorbed, frantically greeting and soliciting them to increase their influence that she didn't notice. It's the same with the Marquis' House."

Alfred nodded looking satisfied.

"It's not good to be too greedy. Since people from other countries were in attendance, it's not advantageous to show that our Kingdom is in chaos. Still, it has reduced the influence of the Second Prince's faction... and tipped the balance of the neutral members' opinions. As expected of you, grandmother."

"I didn't do anything at all. If I have to say something, it was Edward who caused his own self-destruction... is probably the best way to explain it. At any rate, has that child always been so thoughtless?"

"Who knows... From the very start, he has always been egotistical. If one is to describe his current state, it will be "If he loses his stopper, he will rampage," or somewhere along those lines."

Hearing Alfred's description... I thought it was accurate and nodded my head. It was a perfectly fitting phrase.

"So what you're saying is that the stopper, that Baron's daughter... must be taken away. How was it? Since it's you, you have probably already investigated her."

"Yes, of course. ...Ludy."

"Yes."

Ludy, who always stood on the side, reacted to Alfred's words and took a step forward.

"When we investigated the girl, we found out that she is the illegitimate child of the head of the House of Noir. His partner was a housemaid who was serving in the Royal Castle.

After that, the maid resigned from her position and entered the Noir House. Then, she gave birth to a daughter, Yuri, she left the Noir Baron House and went into seclusion.

Baron Noir seemed like he looked for her whereabouts, but he was not able to find her for the past dozen years, and it wasn't until the year before the girl enrolled at the academy that she was found."

Until she was found, I wonder if she has been living in the streets? Even so, to actually look for her without any result for over a dozen years, exactly how large of an importance did the Baron place on her existence...?

"Is that so... Are there any other information?"

"I am really sorry. There is no other information right now."

"I understand. Please continue your investigation on her."

"Certainly."

"...That said, it would be advantageous for you to have that stopper removed."

"...Well, I wonder what it is you're implying."

When I asked, Alfred played dumb and smiled. Really, he absolutely doesn't want to reveal his intentions.

"However, because of this matter, there are those who would definitely side Second Prince faction thinking... "Since he doesn't have a good head on his shoulders, he should be easy to manipulate." and thus joined delightedly. As for the people who are on our side, they were probably pleased to see Edward showing such an appearance. Therefore, it's presumably very convenient for you, right?"

"...Well, I won't disagree that it will not be a disadvantage to me if he becomes a good bait."

Although Alfred said while smiling wryly, I, too, agreed with him. The people at the top should protect the common people... As of now, there aren't many aristocrat Houses with prided themselves in doing that.

Or rather, they do things for the prosperity of their own Houses... To be prideful of their social standings for their own self-satisfaction, and repeatedly use their influences for their personal greed. These kinds of people, they will probably also try to make use of the royal family.

...Since it's like that, Edward will not be a good ruler. After all, if I have to point out something, he gives the impression that he would do whatever he likes.

After all, there might be another side who would want to make use of that child. ...Even more so because Alfred has yet to show himself.

Alfred hasn't taken the center stage for more than ten years. Even though he attended the academy for noble children, he graduated from the academy without using the royal family's name. There are probably not a lot of people who remembers him when he was younger.

The First Prince whose name is not even well known, and the Second Prince who can be used... That's probably what some people are thinking.

However, on the contrary, it is a chance to completely eradicate those people. As long as that child continues to act the same way as he did in yesterday's party.

"...And so? Have you already made plans on what you intend to do in the future?"

"..."

Although I tried asking, as I expected, he remained silent. The only thing he did was smiled. Really, although he is my own grandson, I cannot read his emotions.

"Well, it's fine. Based on whatever it is you plan on doing, I will just go

along with it. No matter what it is you have planned, I'm sure that the results will be splendid."

As long as the daughter of the Baron, Yuri, is present, nothing can be expected of Edward. This is something I understood during the recent party.

When I think of the moment that child ascends the throne and obtains the power... The risks are too big. That being the case when I consider the future of this Kingdom... I can only entrust it to the person in front of me, Alfred. Even if Alfred ends up letting me down, he is still better than that child.

"...Which reminds me, I invited Iris to the recent party. She has grown up and became really beautiful."

When I said that, he reacted with a sudden but slight twitch. ...However, his face immediately returned to his previous smiling expression where one couldn't read what he's thinking.

"Grandmother. Why did you especially went out of your way to invite her?"

Although his the tone of his voice was a little sharp, I was happy. Because it means that he is considerably concerned in her affairs.

"Oh my, it's because I love girls who always does her best. Isn't it natural for me to want to meet her?"

When I started recalling it, I started to smile. She has similar facial features to Melly, and one can feel the same atmosphere the Duke of Armelia has surrounding her.

Fufufu... If Melly is a large rose, then Iris similar to a beautiful, upright and dignified lily. Her elegance is different, that's what I thought when I saw her.

"In addition, this is a positive thing for Iris, isn't it? I heard from Melly that she's been receiving invitations left and right."

"...Considering her quick-wittedness, there are no possibilities that

people will not approach her."

"That might be so. Her background in business, achievements, appearance, and lineage... all of them are really attractive. Doesn't Alfred thinks so as well?"

"I think so, too."

Alfred answered casually. Ahhh, really. Although I think it's fine if he let his expression loose a little more. While I was thinking so, when I quietly observed Alfred, I noticed that he looked a little troubled which cause me to deepen my smile.

"What is it? It seems like you want to ask something."

"No? There's nothing in particular."

In this kind of situation, it can't be helped if I want to make him more unsettled. Well, since I was able to shake Alfred a little, let's call this a win.

"Come to think of it, Alfred. In your eyes, what do you think of the House of the Duke of Armelia?"

"What exactly do you mean by that?"

"The government of their fief, and its structure. ...I don't have any ulterior motive."

"If I were to put it in one word... it's 'interesting.' Various reforms are being made. If there's something I'm worried about, it's their growing military potential. In my opinion, one hundred years in the future, it won't be strange if the Duke of Armelia's House will become the most prosperous in the entire Kingdom."

"As I thought, it's like that after all. It's not something to be happy about if one House has too much power. ...That said, for the development of the Kingdom, it is necessary for each fief to advance as well. Because of that, we must make an allowance on something that shouldn't exist."

"Although you say that, since it's grandmother, it's not like you will do anything unkind towards their House. The fact that the Royal Guards

whose skills are the pride of the royal family are mostly from the Duke of Armelia's House, and that we continue to leave them alone is an excellent proof of that."

"Well, that's right. In addition, there is also that fact that the previous heads and current head of their family have been supporting the entire Kingdom as its Prime Minister... And compared to other nobles, they are the definition of an aristocrat who behave like proper aristocrats and contribute to the Kingdom... Especially with the current situation, they haven't done anything particularly rebellious."

Not only is the Duke of Armelia doing a good job being the Kingdom's Prime Minister, their House also makes contributions towards the royal family. Rather than chipping the power and influence of that House, it makes one more confident that that House is powerful.

In addition, I also heard some of their standpoints. They are gradually giving their support to Alfred to become the next King. Because of various situations, Edward has gotten himself into a difficult position with the Prime Minister. Although I have been retired up until recently, I'm being made to work. Just like once upon a time... because of that guy.

"...Well then, grandmother. Please excuse me, I must get going now."

When the conversation ended, Alfred bowed towards me and left.

Chapter 37: Activities in the Royal City

Ah, how nostalgic... For a while, I looked at the scenery of the Royal City in comparison to the fief and became absorbed in it. Compared to the day-to-day life in the fief, living in the Royal City felt like a raging wave.

That is because of what happened ten days ago...

"Oh my, it does seem that a lot of invitations has arrived."

After the party to commemorate the founding of the Kingdom, we decided to spend a day to relax at home and drink tea. Although my body doesn't feel that tired, my mind did. At that time, while I was drinking tea with mother, one of the butlers serving our house came to deliver invitations sent to our House.

"Earl Monroe and Marquis Rudolf are associates of Ellia's maternal House... So there's no way I would go."

"The invitations are not just for Her Grace, but there are invitations for the young mistress as well."

"I'm not understanding the meaning more and more. Well... after looking at what happened at that party, I can understand why they would want to make an acquaintance. Iris-chan, do you want to go?"

"No way... I certainly never had a thought of going."

For me to attend a tea party held in the Houses of one of the Second Prince's faction? I will absolutely refuse to go. In the first place, there's no point in trying to deepen the association now.

"I thought so as well."

Mother blew out a sigh and continued drinking tea.

"Oh, are there any other Houses that you would like to go to?"

"...The House of Marquis Langley."

"The House of Marquis Langley? Ah, if I'm not mistaken, the daughter of that House was one of Iris-chan's classmates."

“Yes. We got acquainted while I was still in the academy.”

Mimosa – I wonder how she’s doing...? Although we’ve been exchanging letters from time to time, it’s been more than two years since we last met.

“If that’s the case, then we’ll go to Marquis Langley’s House. Besides that, is there any other Houses you would like to go to?”

“Hmm, which Houses does mother think will be fine to go to?”

Apart from the Houses part of the Second Prince’s faction, there are numerous other invitations. However, because I didn’t leave the fief for so long, I am not well informed regarding most of the Houses.

However, since I got the opportunity to make some connections... I would also like to take the time to get acquainted with some of them. Because of that, “which House” to go to becomes really important.

Because I don’t have much time... I need to be efficient. In order to decide on which Houses would be best to make acquaintances with, I consulted with mother.

“I guess Baron Messi’s House would be good. After that, the Earl of Dranbalt’s House.”

“The Earl of Dranbalt’s House, if I’m not mistaken, mother and that House’s Countess has a deep friendship?”

From the corner of my memory, I remembered mother going to the Dranbalt’s House a lot.

“Yes. The Countess has really good sense, and it’s very interesting to talk to her.”

“Since it’s mother who is saying that, it’s quite a compliment.”

“Thank you. ...In addition, Dranbalt’s House is part of the neutral faction, so when they hold a tea party, the majority of the people invited are also neutral members. If Iris-chan wants to learn about the strife of the factions, won’t this be a perfect chance?”

As expected of mother... It was as if she read my mind, and because of

that, I decided in my heart to attend the Dranbalt's tea party.

"If Iris-chan will be going, I will go as well."

"Let's go together, mother. Then, is there something about Baron Messi's House?"

"As for Baron Messi, he is one of the people who fought alongside father in the war against the Towair Kingdom. Knighthood was bestowed upon him because of his military exploits... However, the region he governs is adjacent to the Towair Kingdom, so even though it's the season, he rarely leaves his fief in order to protect the border."

"Baron Messi... Ah, you mean Mabaras-sama? I heard about him from grandfather once. If I'm not mistaken, he is a close friend of grandfather."

"That's right. And he is also known as the excellent right arm of father. You do know that in the past, father played an active role in the military unit during the war?"

"Yes. Of course, I know about it."

At that time, there was an impasse... No, we were actually a little inferior, and the person who turned the tide and brought victory to the Tasmeria Kingdom was grandfather.

Because what had happened, grandfather was appointed as General, and even until now, he is respected by the Knights and Military personnel.

...And when I wanted to hear about the old times from grandfather, if I remember correctly, he stayed silent while looking embarrassed.

"That's right. Because the history books omitted the a lot of details, not a lot was said about what happened in the vicinity. Nevertheless, because of what had happened, it led to Mabaras-sama being rewarded with Knighthood..."

"Certainly, since it's like that, it would be best for me to meet him at least once."

This is a rare opportunity... Since that's the case, I should meet him at least once.

“Yes. In addition, Baron Messi is part of the First Prince faction, naturally, most of the people who will attend are part of the First Prince faction.”

“If that’s the case, there is more of a reason for me to go.”

“That’s how it is. ...Earl Monroe holds entertainments all the time, but it would be more constructive for him to be more like Baron Messi who is usually protecting the borders.”

“...Yeah...”

After listening to mother’s words, I immediately pulled up a map of Tasmeria Kingdom in my head. That reminds me, the House of Earl Monroe and Baron Messi’s fief are close to each other, which near the borders of our Kingdom and Towair Kingdom’s.

If I’m not mistaken, it was also the main battlefield during the war against the Towair Kingdom. Because that area is where the granary is, the war started by aiming for the crops.

The Towair Kingdom is further up north where the land is mostly damp. In comparison, our Kingdom is rich in crops and that’s the reason why they aimed for our Kingdom.

Most of our country has everlasting spring, we have a lot of fertile lands where crops can easily grow. The land governed by Earl Monroe is north of Tasmeria Kingdom, which has four seasons, but nevertheless, different crops can be produced.

“Does Earl Monroe’s fief covers a large area of land?”

“Yes, something like that. However, every year, even before the season begins, he’s staying in the Royal City. He attends parties here and there, and in return, he also holds considerable entertainments.”

“Is that so, but why...”

Especially since the location around his land is insecure. The war against the Towair Kingdom ended, but there was no signed truce agreement, so there is no ceasefire. That said, I am hopeless to help with

the situation since that area is not where the fief I govern is. The only thing I can do is keep it in mind and observe what happens.

“Let’s put that matter aside. This time, since Iris-chan doesn’t have much time, I thought it would be good, but what do you think?”

“Yes… As mother suggested, I will be attending the events of these three Houses.”

“Is that so. Then, let us send an answer immediately… and the closest event is…”

“It’s the event at Marquis Langley’s House. The event is the day after tomorrow. However, instead of calling it an entertainment, it’s more like a private event.”

We quickly gave our answer to the butler who was still waiting.

“Is that so. Then, Iris-chan. Let’s start our preparations tomorrow.”

“Yes, mother.”

Thus, this began my visitation of parties after a long time. …That said, there was only three.

Chapter 38: Reunion

Firstly, it was the visit to Marquis Langley's House.

Because it's a private event, I thought that I wouldn't feel nervous... But after thinking that it's been a long time since I met Mimosa, I started feeling nervous. After I have arrived in Marquis Langley's mansion, one of their servants led me to their drawing room.

"...It's been a long time. Iris-sama."

In the drawing room, Mimosa was already there sitting while waiting.

"Thank you very much for your invitation today."

I returned her greetings and sat down. With that timing, apart from one lady's maid, Mimosa asked all the servants to leave the room.

"...Let's stop the greetings here... Iris, it has really been such a long time. I'm glad to see you looking so spirited..."

I wonder what happened to that solemn atmosphere from earlier, she returned to her natural self. Mimosa Langley. She was my classmate in the academy and my best friend. As for her appearance, with slightly drooping eyes, she looks gentle and cute. Because my facial features look a little strict, there's a complete contrast between us.

"I'm sorry for worrying you, Mimosa..."

"Seriously. While I was resting because of a cold, I didn't think you would be expelled... That's why I kept telling you to be careful of those people."

Mimosa did warn me severely back then. 'Don't get too close to that daughter of a Baron, Yuri, and not be too concerned with her.' However, when I saw her getting close to Edward-sama, I tried to interfere and was faced with uncompromising retaliation as a result.

"I have reflected. At that time, I didn't think that the other side would plan so far ahead and retaliate to that extent."

"You're right. If it was the old them, I don't think they would even think

of going to that extent. However, when those people became associated with that child, they changed a lot."

"Yes... Mimosa, you noticed it as well?"

"Isn't it only you who did not notice because you were too crazily absorbed with Edward-sama? With just a glimpse, I saw it all. Hey, Iris... to be honest, I'm scared of that girl."

"...Scared?"

Although I started to smile, but after seeing the serious expression on her face, I withdrew my smile. When I came face to face with her during the party, she looked like an innocent girl with the fascination of a child, so I didn't really think about it.

"I'm scared because I cannot tell what she's thinking at all. In addition, she seems really innocent under the guise of a child... But it doesn't feel that way at all.

I mean, if you look at those people... Until those people met that child, they would act according to training they were given depending on their individual statuses, so do you think they would have behaved in such a way?

It is because they understood their own positions that they were more vigilant compared to others of people who might want to utilize them... Nevertheless, they immediately and readily fell into that child's palm and moved in the way she wanted.

And because they themselves are not aware of the situation, it's attributed to that child's clever actions. Even their arrogant behaviors, I found it suspicious and wondered if there's any meaning behind them."

"...Are you not thinking about it too much? I mean, her actions and way of speaking might just be her natural self."

In this situation, I find it difficult to think that it's that child's technique. That's what I thought when I took things into consideration.

...That said, there is also that part of me who is in complete denial. One

of the reasons is because I felt uneasy is concerning the words Mimosa used to describe the Baron's daughter, Yuri, while she was still in the academy. The other reason is because I thought that the things she spoke of was too extreme... and I tried to drive it to the corner of my mind.

"...Is that so... Really, let's put a stop to this topic."

Although Mimosa didn't look convinced, she couldn't find any words to refute it, and seemed to have grudgingly agreed.

"Apart from that, Iris. How are you doing these days?"

After switching the topic, Mimosa returned to her natural calm self and asked. Mimosa is, how should I describe this... She is very feminine, and the atmosphere around her feel very maternal.

"...Even if you ask me how I've been... It's exactly as I have written in my letters. I guess you could say that... I've been busy managing the conglomerate, and up to my neck in the fief's politics."

"I want to hear all the details about it. Isn't it wonderful? You opened a large store here in the Royal City, and isn't the most popular cafe also part of Azura Conglomerate? Mother and I are a big fan of their beauty products, and I also love their confectioneries, especially the chocolates."

"Thank you very much for that."

"In addition, you became really beautiful... Did you do anything special?"

When I saw her looking at me with dreamy eyes and started laughing, I winced a little.

"I-I didn't really do anything special. I don't have that much free time. ...Mimosa, as well, what have you been doing lately?"

"I also haven't been doing much? ...After graduating from the academy, because I am not engaged to anyone, I have been staying in the Royal City and undergoing bridal preparations until I find a partner... That's how it was supposed to be, but with the current situation, I don't want to immediately find a partner... so I've been a little bored."

“Oh…”

Strangely, I completely understand. Especially the latter half. At this time, with the active struggle of the factions, since one won’t know which side their partner might join, it’s better to hold off than to make a bad marriage.

“Well, it’s all good. Since I’m not at all ready for marriage either. It’s a good chance to reflect upon myself.”

If anything, I think Mimosa would have received a lot of offers for marriage… I thought it was a little regretful. But I’m sure it’s not just Mimosa, a lot of Houses part of the neutral faction are finding it hard to find a partner.

Going with the flow, I started drinking tea, but my hand holding the cup suddenly stopped. Together with some scones and sandwiches, there was a familiar chocolate engraved with a lily.

“I’m sorry about this, Iris. Although it’s one of your store’s product… as I’ve said earlier, it’s one of my favorites.”

“There’s no need for you to apologize. I’m really glad you like it that much. That reminds me, I plan to inspect the stores here in the Royal City… Would Mimosa like to come along?”

“Could you be talking about the store of Azura Conglomerate?”

Mimosa’s eyes started to sparkle.

“Because I plan to visit the affiliated stores as well, it might be a little tough. After all, I have some time left here in the Royal City… So I was thinking of taking this opportunity to see the state of the stores. Of course, because it’s an inspection, although there would be a lot of people there, it can’t be helped if we don’t bring a lot of guards for security purposes.”

Because it’s an inspection, we cannot take that many people. However, as a daughter of an aristocrat, Mimosa’s House might not agree with her going out without a certain number of guards.

“How many people would it be okay to take along?”

“Up to two people… I will be taking Ryle and Dida along, as well as Tanya.”

“If Ryle-san and Dida-san will be with us, I don’t think father will oppose to it.”

“Oh my, you seem to trust those two very much.”

“That is only natural. Their superiority has been known throughout the Kingdom… It is only natural to trust and rely on their strength.”

“I wonder if that’s the case. …If you successfully receive permission, please send me a note.”

“Yes, of course. When should I send it by?”

“Sometime this week.”

“I understand.”

After that, until the sun went down, we continued talking about our days in the academy, and the current fashion in the Royal City. As the saying goes, time flies by really quickly when you’re having fun, and if Tanya didn’t tell me that should head home soon… I might have continued to immerse myself with talking to her.

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Translator’s Message

I have a positive opinion of Mimosa and think that she’s quite intelligent. And based on her assessment of Yuri, even I would feel terrified.

Chapter 39: Analysis

"...Young mistress. Are you thinking about what Mimosa Langley-sama said earlier?"

While we were riding the carriage to return home, Tanya brought up the topic. Although I was absentmindedly looking outside, I immediately focused my glance at Tanya.

"...When you said a while ago, when exactly do you mean?"

"It's when she was talking about the daughter of the Baron, Yuri. Excuse me for being forward, but the young mistress' expression looked like you were momentarily lost in thought."

"...I am surprised. To think that Tanya was watching carefully."

"It is the maid's duty to understand what our master is thinking."

Although Tanya clarified the reason why... I still think she's amazing. Even though I intended not to show it on my face as much as possible.

"...Young mistress, with your appearance, it seems like you didn't think that Mimosa-sama was overthinking things..."

"That's right. However, it's nothing really exorbitant?"

I have no grounds to suspect her. Or rather, because it was too extreme, I withdrew myself and tried not to think of those words.

...However, talking about it now might be a good idea. Since it's Tanya, I am certain I can trust that she will not say anything to anyone. Above all, more than anything, she would probably feel really honored for me to talk to her about it.

"If you'd like, could you please let me know some of the things you were thinking of...?"

"Even though Mimosa has warned me about it... I really thought it was because I dug my own grave."

"What do you mean to say?"

“First of all, about that soup kitchen. Although it was criticized by the aristocrats and other bureaucrats... But when one thinks about it from the perspective of the common people, wouldn’t they welcome it? And they would think, ‘They are actually thinking about us.'”

From what I heard from father, they cannot continue to distribute food for long. This country doesn’t have the capabilities to do it. Because of the remaining debt from the previous war, I thought that the Finance should be tightening things up even more.

Thus, instead of using more and more money to distribute food to the people, I believe the money should be used for something else.

In addition, the people don’t know the current financial situation of the country. They have no way of finding out. In other words, because they have no idea how much pressure the country’s finances is under, when taxes are temporarily raised, their impression of the country will worsen. However, it doesn’t mean that the impressions they have of the Second Prince will change.

“When thinking of it this way, they will be able to make allies with the common people. ...About Miss Yuri’s behavior. She behaved that way even though she’s an aristocrat.”

“About the distribution of food?”

“No. Her speech and behavior during that party.”

“I have heard about her behavior during the party, I believe it was something the Second Prince’s faction would have pulled...?”

“Yeah, that’s right. I think most aristocrats would think so. However, isn’t it too convenient for it to be interpreted that way?”

“Convenient, you say...?”

“Right. For example, if I not only want to maintain the rights I have acquired but further gain more rights and power... Instead of the First Prince whose existence remains a mystery, the Second Prince is better.

After all, what kind of person is the First Prince, and what kind of

thoughts he has... because he has not come forward for over ten years, it is almost impossible to comprehend. As for Ed-sama, I think he is suitable and an easy target for Miss Yuri to elevate her own status, that's my impression."

"Is it because 'he is easy to manipulate?'"

"If one is to put it simply, yes. The arrogant behavior he displays when it comes to Miss Yuri, it might be what impresses Yuri even further."

"...I see..."

"That said, I have no grounds for suspicion... As I thought, I might be overthinking it."

Un, I feel like I have become a person who over thinks too much. If one obtained people one can use, then one should use them. If one wants to make sure Ed-sama rises to the throne, it would have been more than enough to make a frontal attack.

For starters, there was no need to drag Ed-sama's head and show him a flower garden... To show the royal family, to gather the hyena-like aristocrats, to drag other people in, and to choose situations where one would deepen the antagonism between the people of this country.

"However, young mistress. Just to be safe, it's better for you to take some precautions."

"That's right. ...For starters, I will be extra cautious in communicating with the royal family and other dealings in the Royal City. After all, the current King has fallen ill... With the current situation, I can't help but be anxious."

As for Azura Conglomerate, in order to not centralized its operation in the Royal City, it has directly opened a branch in each fief and has been recently increasing the number of exchanges made with foreign countries. When I consider the affected earnings, I found that this progress can't be helped, and it's better to withdraw from the Royal City before the confusion increases.

In addition, the conglomerates in the fief are sure to take similar

actions. To begin with, when I spoke to Moneda for the first time, the trade in the Royal City has already decreased.

Afterward, the peace and order of the fief should be maintain. Even if the confusion in the Royal City doesn't intensify, it doesn't mean that we won't receive sparks of it... Nevertheless, we have already established a security force beforehand. I guess I should have a discussion about this with Ryle and Dida.

"As for me, I will try to gather as much information as I can."

"I see... I'm counting on you."

When I returned home, I went to my room to relax. Since I am free the day after tomorrow, other than our conglomerate, I wonder if I should look around the Royal City.

Since it's been a long time, it might be good to look at the academy from the outside. For some reason, after meeting Mimosa again, I kind of missed it. While thinking about those things, I feel asleep just like that.

Chapter 40: Tea Time with the Madams

Now then, today is the day to visit Earl Dranbalt. This time, it's different compared to when I went to visit Marquis Langley's house, and various other people have been invited. ...And because of that, I am really nervous.

"Iris-chan, you'll be fine so you don't have to worry so much~"

However, since I'm together with mother, I find it reassuring. I am really reassured. The next House I am to visit next is Baron Messi's House, so I want to take this opportunity to regain my senses.

When we arrived and Earl Dranbalt's House, a servant came to greet us at the door. And then, a man dressed in a tailcoat guided us. The place we arrive at was a beautiful courtyard filled with greeneries.

"Welcome, and thank you for coming. Lady Mellice, Iris-sama."

A woman who was sitting at the center table stood up and came to greet us with a smile. She has soft golden hair that seems to shine even more brightly under the sun. Although her figure was a little round, she seems gentle and cheerful... She was Earl Dranbalt's wife, Countess Dranbalt.

"Thank you for sending an invitation for today's event. Together with my daughter, we were looking forward to it."

Mother responded with a formal tone. No matter how close mother is with Countess Dranbalt, she wouldn't act out of order because there were others around.

"Oh, my, for Lady Mellice to say something like that, I'm very honored. Please, come in and have a seat."

When Countess Dranbalt said that, she pointed us to vacant place. A man wearing a tailcoat was immediately standing by near us.

"Then, I shall accept your offer."

And then, we respectively headed to our vacant seats.

The garden was well-kept and overflowing with greenery. And the tables

were arranged opposite of it, giving it the best view of the surroundings. What is stood out, even more, were the dresses people wore. Light pink, light yellow, light blue... Everyone was wearing pastel colors. Perhaps they each person was to represent a flower and were seated in that order as well. I see, the reason why the dress code – wear pastel colors – was specified on the invitation was to aim for this outcome.

"I shall make the introduction. This is Lady Remedy, Earl Caldina's wife."

"Please treat me well."

When the lady standing on the left side of Countess Dranbalt saw me, she nodded at me lightly. When I saw her, I also slightly lowered my head.

"This here is Lady Dora Danas, Earl Danas' wife."

"I have been looking forward to meeting Lady Mellice and Iris-sama."

The lady beside Lady Remedy said so and also bowed lightly. And I, too, like a bobblehead doll, bowed my head lightly again.

"And then, this lady over here is Salina Mines, Baron Mines' wife."

"I am honored to meet you."

...With that, all the introductions were done. To be honest, it was getting hard for me to put faces to their names... so I was thankful that it ended.

And then, the tea party began. I ate some of the sweets placed on the table and drank the tea that was served. Unn, it's delicious... Since it will be embarrassing if I cannot follow the conversation, I perked up my ears.

"The clothes Iris-sama wore the other day was very beautiful. From where did you purchase that dress from?"

Lady Dora suddenly asked that question.

"I used the cloth obtained from the East to make that dress. However, we have not gathered enough materials, but when we do, it will be sold in earnest."

“Oh, so that’s how it is. Although the fabric was wonderful, the design of the dress was also unique and lovely. Where did the design of that dress come from…?”

“I asked a tailor shop from the Duke of Amerlia’s fief to make it.”

“Then, that dress was designed by Iris-sama?”

“No, to say that I designed the dress is a little… I thought something like that would be nice, and roughly explained what I wanted.”

I can’t say that it was because I wanted something easy to move in… At any rate, because I’ve been wearing clothes and dresses that’s easy to wear and suitable for work, it would be difficult for me to suddenly start wearing tight corsets and extravagant and heavy fluttering skirts.

Thanks to my almost impossible request I made to the tailor shop’s designer-san, a non-heavy dress was completed to my satisfaction… That’s the only way to put it.

“So that’s how it was. However, I think that that dress will be popular in the future. Don’t you think so as well, Lady Remedy?”

“Yes. After all, it had garnered a lot of attention during the party. Even now, I believe many have gone to the tailor shop to order one.”

…I wonder if that’s really what’s happening? I mean, if it is like that, isn’t this the chance to advertise the clothes from the Duke of Armelia’s fief?

While I was thinking about it, before I knew it, the topic of the conversation changed. The current fashion, and the current state of each House.

The center of the conversation is the organizer, Countess Dranbalt, and mother. Countess Dranbalt indirectly brought the topic into the conversation and started to calm everyone down. Mother also didn’t try to obstruct the organizer in any way, and the place was brightening up visible to the eye.

“…Now that I think about it, about Earl Monroe’s House. A rumor came

about that he has been using his influence a lot lately, has anyone else heard of it?"

Lady Remedy brought up that topic.

"No, but I do know that Earl Monroe has been holding a lot of extravagant entertainments lately. I once saw his wife wearing a brand new large diamond necklace, and two days after later at one of the events, I saw her wearing a brand new large emerald earring. When the jeweler came to our house, he implied that Earl Monroe has been ordering many pieces of jewelry and dress lately, you do know about it? Also, it seems like he has been going to Azura Conglomerate non-stop."

"I am only in charged of the management of Azura Conglomerate, and for the management of our patrons, someone else is in charge of it... But after hearing your story, it sure is amazing."

Because the glances were directed towards me, for the time being, I gave them an answer. Other than the basic overall management, I have not looked into other things.

As for the patron management and other things, I have left it all to Sei and other people. Thus, until now, I do not know how much each House has spent. However, even if I knew it, I wouldn't tell anyone else.

More precisely, if Lady Remedy's story is true, then I wonder why Earl Monroe is so prosperous? Was he like that from the very start? No, if I'm not mistaken, the granary is in his land. Although I haven't heard of him suddenly starting a business or anything...

"Isn't that right? I also received the news during the party."

"What an enviable situation. Speaking of jewels, Lady Dora. Where did you purchase the jewels you wore during the party the other day? It was very beautiful and I was charmed just by looking at it."

Right then, mother changed the topic of the conversation. Although I wanted to hear a little bit more about the previous topic, I guess I'll pull back here. Or rather, as expected of mother, she was able to observe everyone who attended the party.

“About that, it’s a jewel called Topaz. Because I was enchanted by the beautiful red tinge of the jewel, I pleaded my husband for one.”

“When a woman pleads, it’s a good way for the men to show their resourcefulness. And so, was Earl Danas pleased with it?”

Hearing Lady Remedy’s words, I wondered if that was indeed the case, but for the time being, I shut my mouth and listened. I didn’t have a husband before I was reborn, and although I was engaged before... when I asked him to go shopping with me, Edward-sama found it really troublesome.

“Not at all, my husband is completely ignorant of jewels...”

“Even though he is ignorant of jewels, when he saw Lady Dora wearing it, I’m sure he would have surely fallen in love all over again. Don’t you think so as well, Lady Mellice?”

“Lady Dora is youthful and a lovely looking lady. Isn’t it because of that that Earl Danas was on tenterhooks during the party?”

When they heard mother’s words, everyone said ‘kyaa’ with a high-pitched voice. From that point on, the topics of the conversation kept switching in random order, such as who looked really cool.

As for those ladies with daughters, they started dreaming what kind of husband they would want for them. However, there was someone in the vicinity who couldn’t bring her heart to join in on the conversation.

...Mother as well, I wonder if she wanted to think about whom she would want me to marry? But because of what happened with Ed-sama, it is natural for families not to want me to marry into theirs.

I wonder if she was holding back because of me since she didn’t say anything about who she would want her daughter to have as a husband. ...Nevertheless, I am very thankful for it.

“...Iris-sama, what do you think about it?”

Hearing Lady Remedy’s question, I pulled myself together. It won’t do to think about too much during a tea party.

“I am very sorry, I was a little absent-minded just then... What were to referring to?”

“About your future husband. What kind of person would you think would be best for you?”

“As everyone already knows, my engagement has been annulled. Thus, I want to live a quiet life in the fief for the rest of my days.”

As for my future dream, I want to be surrounded by children from the orphanage or something similar. ...I thought that it was a good plan for the future.

“Oh my... Iris-sama, surely you jest. You are not only the daughter of the Duke of Armelia, you have also done a brilliant job in managing the fief as the fief Lord’s proxy and is the President of a famous Conglomerate. In addition, didn’t the Queen Dowager also specially set her eyes on you?”

“...Is that so?”

“Yes. If our House was a Ducal House, by all means, it would be our privilege to have you.”

Looking regretful, Lady Remedy let out a sigh. As though agreeing to her statement, Lady Salina also nodded.

I didn’t think that they were assessing me in such manner, so I was little surprised. ...Nevertheless, even if they ask me for the kind of person I’d like to marry, I don’t really have anyone in mind.

...Even though there was a small feeling of depression, the conversation continued. Although I was feeling nervous, when it ended, I felt the event was quite pleasant. And for everyone to be able to enjoy themselves to this extent, this is attributed to Countess Dranbalt’s abilities.

I do not have the experience of being a host, and I don’t know if I’ll ever have a chance to be one in the future... However, if I get an opportunity to hold an event such as this one, I would want it to have the same friendly atmosphere as Countess Dranbalt’s... Or rather, as I thought, I would want to have the same sophisticated event that mother usually has, and because of that, I thought to do some training.

Chapter 41: Strolling around the Royal City

Now then, today is the day I take a stroll around the Royal City. I received a message from Mimosa saying she will be able to come, so I've been looking forward to it.

"...Young mistress, it's about time you make preparations."

While I was practicing yoga at my usual spot, I heard Tanya's voice coming from behind. Oh, my, it's already that time. And so, I hurriedly took a shower and started preparing. Because I will be going to town today, I changed to my usual "Alice" clothing.

"Mimosa-sama has already arrived."

"Then, please have her wait in the next room. I will be there soon."

When I finished preparing, I headed to the room next to mine. Although the next room is also part of my room, if the place I was dressing up in a little while ago is a private space, then the room next to that one has a drawing room kind of feeling.

"Good morning, Mimosa. I'm sorry to have asked you to come so early in the morning."

"Good morning, Iris. Oh my... what you're wearing suits you really well."

"Mimosa as well."

Because Mimosa will also be going to town incognito today, what she's wearing makes her more docile than usual. I guess one could describe her current appearance as a daughter of a merchant.

"And also, when I'm wearing this kind of outfit, I'm Alice."

"What is that?"

Mimosa looked like she was rather fascinated.

"An alias, it's an alias. It's not like I can announce my name to the public... So the first thing one would need to do is change one's appearance, right? When you give yourself an alias, it gives an extremely different feeling."

How should I say this, it's gives a feeling of being an actress. When someone calls me with that name... I would make me get more into the role or something like that.

"I see... Since that's the case, then my name will be Misha."

"I understand. Well then, Misha. Shall we be off now... Or rather, I'll make some introductions first. This is Tanya, I guess you already know her, and these two, Ryle and Dida, will serve as our guards today."

The two people who were waiting behind, when I introduced them, they slightly bowed their heads. Although it was normal for Ryle to do so, but Dida is usually easy-going, so I felt quite uneasy.

"Nice to meet me... However, I've heard your names before, so it doesn't feel like this is my first time meeting you. Please take care of me today. On the other hand, these two are my guards, Harry, and Dan."

Harry and Dan who were standing beside Mimosa bowed respectively.

"Harry, Dan. Please treat me well."

I also greeted the two. Harry and Dan has an "I am a guard!" atmosphere around them and felt somewhat stern. For now, since they are wearing plain clothes, I guess it isn't so bad.

"Well then, since we don't have much time, let us be off."

First things first, we headed to the cafe in the Royal City. In here, one can eat chocolate cakes and various other desserts. I wonder how the sales of herbal tea are doing.

When I took a peep, it looks like it's flourishing. The people who were queuing up for it formed a long time. Because we kept the price as low as possible, not only do the aristocrats buy them but also regular people in town.

"Now then, let's go line up."

"...Excuse me for being rude, Alice-sama. Wouldn't be acceptable for you to use your name here?"

Tanya quietly made a proposal. Everyone is probably thinking the same

thing, and question marks lit up above their heads.

"About that, don't you think there will be no point if they knew I was here? What kind of service they provide, the quality of the products they bring out, and how they treat the people who visit the store; one will not experience these things if one doesn't come as a guest. I've also included how long we need to line up in today's schedule."

"I was being too forward, please excuse me."

"Misha. Because it'll be like that, are you fine with walking and waiting a lot today?"

"Yes. When one walks a lot, it's just nice that your stomach will feel more empty."

"If that's the case, then I'm glad."

After that, we waited for a long time before we were able to enter the store. ...I wonder if I should expand this shop. Let's think about that after looking at the appearance of the shop.

The shop is divided into two section, one of the space is for take-out. And the other space has been converted to a coffee shop.

Hmmm... I wonder if it's about time to construct an individual shop for take-outs. Because it takes up a lot of space, and their sales are about the same as the confectionery shop.

That said, 'let's buy some to take home after we finish eating' ...there are also people who have those ideas. Should we keep the store divided but move them to a bigger shop? Or should we establish a branch shop? Hmmm, I'm uncertain.

"Hello, welcome to our shop. For how many people?"

"Seven people."

"I'm really sorry. If it is acceptable for your group to be divided into two, I will be able to guide you to your seats at once..."

"It's fine with us."

And because of that, we were seated separately. Because the other seat is relatively near, we decided to split it this way: Mimosa, Ryle, Tanya, and I in one table, and Harry, Dida, and Dan in another table.

In the beginning, I wanted Tanya to sit in the other table to keep the balance, but she expressed her disapproval. She said, to actually sit in a different table from mine...

And so, I asked if it would be fine for Mimosa and Harry to switch places. So what if they were her guards? Mimosa said that as long and either Ryle or Dida was here, she would be reassured. ...For some reason, it seems she really trusted our two guards.

I ordered a cake set while Mimosa ordered the assorted fruits set with chocolate sauce. After we finished ordering, while waiting for our order to arrive, Mimosa and I started a light chatter.

The system of this cafe: the waiter will come to take the order and write it on a piece of paper, and then pass the order to the kitchen. The table number will be written on that piece of paper and is then passed to the counter that does the accounting.

The number on that paper is the same and the number of the wooden tally on the table. And as for the wooden tally on the table, its back is painted white.

When all the orders have been delivered, they will use the white part, but if another order is made, they will turn it again. Of course, when one makes another order, it will be added to the paper that has been passed onto the accounting counter before the order is delivered. ...That's the kind of system the cafe uses.

Because it might get difficult to calculate the amount when the time comes, an abacus was introduced. When I was still living in Japan... I'm really glad I learned how to use an abacus when I was in primary school.

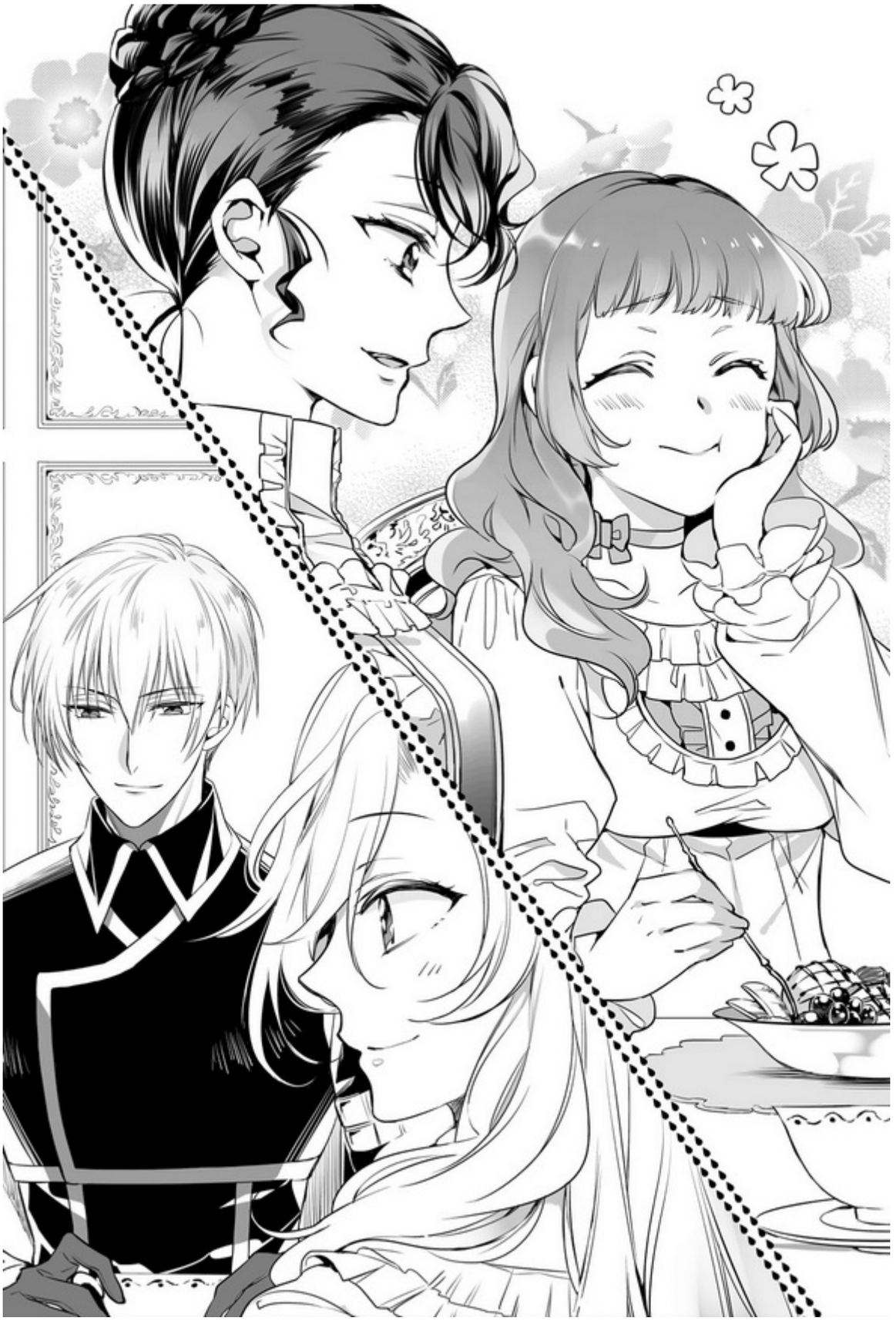
The employees were puzzled by it at first, but they have gotten used to it by now. It was well received and their mental calculation has quickened. Not just in the coffee shop, but I wonder if it should be introduced in the primary school division of the fief... I shall put this

under consideration.

While I was thinking those kinds of things and chatting, before I knew it, our order had arrived.

“Waa... it looks delicious...!”

Mimosa looked delighted just by looking at it and immediately started eating. As for me, because Merida will always let me try her prototype or when she comes up with new products without fail, it doesn’t feel new to me. That said, eating it here in the shop and eating it in the house gives a whole different feeling.



“...Hmm~!! It tastes good!”

Mimosa said so while looking very satisfied. Somehow, I feel happy as though I was the one eating it.

“I’m happy if that’s the case.”

Although they were busy and there were many customers waiting, their service wasn’t sloppy. I am genuinely happy that all the employees are

working hard.

“By the way, why did you decide to start with the coffee shop?”

Mimosa suddenly asked. Before I knew it, the plate in front of her had been wiped clean.

“I didn’t have any particular reason why I chose to come here first. It’s just that they have really good raw ingredients here... that’s all.”

“Nevertheless, it has become this popular, I’m surprised.”

“As for me, I feel blessed just by being here.”

It might be natural for Tanya and the others to feel that way after growing up in that kind of environment. ...It really does feel like a blessing.

“...Now then, it’s about time we get going.”

After we finished eating and talking, we settled our accounts and left the store.

“Next, we’ll be heading to look at the beauty products. Let’s head there slowly while exploring the Royal City.”

Because there’s quite a distance between the coffee shop and the shop that sells the beauty products, we have to walk for a while. On the way, I didn’t forget to roughly look at the shops at the Royal City and prices of their items.

“...Oh?”

Suddenly, my feet stopped walking.

“What’s wrong, Alice?”

“Just now, I thought I saw Miss Yuri or something...”

Because the person disappeared into the crowd, I didn’t get a good look. In addition, because she always stood out well with her entourage, it wasn’t that hard to recognize... but earlier, it looked like she didn’t have two or even one of her followers were with her.

“Are you sure you’re not mistaken? There’s no way she would come here

alone."

"...You might be right."

I wonder if it's because of what Mimosa said about her the other day, as well as my conversation with Tanya. It seems like I cannot get her existence out of my head.

I pulled myself together and headed to the next shop.

*

Translator's Message

Iris thought she saw Yuri. Is she the real one? And what was she doing? Hohoho...

PS: I had to run out and buy myself a strawberry cheesecake after I finished translating this chapter...

Chapter 42: Strolling around the Royal City II

Similar to the coffee shop, we also lined up at the beauty shop, and I started to survey the place. Mimosa kept saying she wanted this and that, but because we will be going to the building reserved for members... I got her to act more prudent.

The members-only building is mostly visited by aristocrats, so Mimosa and I have no choice but to reveal our identities. Although the session will be held in a private area, the possibility of running into aristocrats there are still high.

To enter the place, one person must be a member and the person can bring in two attendants. Thus, Tanya, Ryle, and I are one group, while Mimosa, Harry, and Dan are in one group.

...If a limit was not set, everyone would be bringing many of their maids and escorts, and the shop will be in chaos. Thus, we had to take such measures.

Because of that, the store established a waiting area in the corner of the building for guards to wait in. ...Dida was waiting there, and while he's there, he will be watching the entrance of the building and observe the security.

And so, we entered the store. This shop looks like an aristocrat's villa here in the Royal City. Because we bought a large vacant mansion with a large garden, the walkway to the entrance of the building is quite long.

First things first, we present our membership card at the gate. After admiring the garden and the lush landscape while walking towards the mansion, we went inside the store.

After entering we will be greeted by a butler and presented our membership card. And then, we will be guided to a private room... that's how it works.

"...Iris-sama. Welcome, and please enjoy your visit."

When the butler saw me, he wasn't confused at all. By the way, his name is Barrett. He used to work as a butler at a certain merchant's house.

"Oh, my, you're not surprised at all."

"I knew that you have arrived here in the Royal City. And I was wondering... when you will take the time to come visit."

"Since that's the case, it seems like I cannot inspect this place in secret."

When I said that in a form of a joke, Barrett smiled from ear to ear. Although he is already an old man, his smile has strange powers.

"With all due respect, Iris-sama. Many aristocrats come to visit this place every single day. Because even the most trifling thing might end up as a big problem... we cannot relax at all."

"Is that so. If so, I'm looking forward to seeing what's inside. But before that, I would like to talk to you, so please go ahead and guide Mimosa first."

"I understand. Then, Mimosa-sama please come with me."

"Please take care of me."

"Barrett. I will be waiting over there, when you're done guiding her, please come pick me up."

"I understand."

After I sent Barrett and Mimosa off, I left the entrance and entered a certain room. This room is near the vicinity of the entrance and has no particular use. Because the mansion is quite large, there are a number of unused rooms.

The second floor is basically where all the private rooms to receive guests are. One person per room, servants will guide the people there while the employees will describe the products or provide a demonstration for new products.

On the first floor lies the storage area for the products and a place for

the employees to take a break. Although the room I am currently in is vacant, it is because it has not been decided what the rooms on the first floor will be used for. I believe that in the near future, it will also be put into practical use.

"Welcome, how may I help you."

Oh, my, it looks like someone has arrived. From the room, I heard a voice coming from the entrance.

"I came here today with a companion. Please take care of us."

When I quietly opened the door to take a peak, Barrett had already returned to greet them While I was gazing at the other party wondering who had arrived...

Oh, if isn't Earl Monroe. Although he is a little far away, that guy with a stout physical build, a head full of blonde hair and curly forelock bangs covering his forehead... there's probably no doubt about it? I wonder... if he is the guy from the rumors.

Then, I shifted my attention to his companion. I thought that it was either his wife or his son... but it was someone I was completely unfamiliar with. If it was a woman, I thought it might be a mistress of his, but I can't tell from the person's features at all.

However, because the servant or escort following them was completely different... Who is it? While I was thinking about those things, the two already went up.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting, Iris-sama."

While I was being absentminded, Barrett knocked on the door and entered the room.

"It's quite alright. That aside, Barrett. Does Earl Monroe often come here?"

"Yes, it is as you say. In one week, he will come once or twice without fail."

"Is that so."

That's relatively often. ...However, I'm happy for the shop.

"What kind of products does he usually buy?"

"As for the Earl, he buys a lot of confectioneries. Also, just recently, he purchased an Eau de Cologne. In addition, when he was accompanied by his wife or son, they also made many purchases."

If one is to consider what's normal... is this normal? That said, although the prices are set quite high, it still depends on how much one buys.

"Heehhh... What kind of products do his wife and son purchase?"

"As for the Madam, as expected, it beauty products. She also asked to receive consultations often. As for the son, as one would expect, he's similar to the Earl who likes chocolate. Every time they come, they will purchase a splendid amount of things. We would often need to help load them into their carriages, and it would take a while before we finish."

A splendid amount... he said. While I was wondering how they were able to consume them all... I remembered that Earl Monroe often holds entertainments, so they probably use them then.

"Iris-sama...?"

Barrett called out to me who fell silent while lost in thought.

"Oh, my, I'm sorry. What I would like to talk to you about is nothing extreme. I was just wondering if there's something bothering you or if there's something you would like to improve... If there's anything at all, I want you to let me know directly. Of course, I will have to confirm everything you report to me."

Because he has already found me out, I wanted to listen to the opinion of someone who is working on-site. In addition, this is a place where aristocrats visit in a regularly, I was more or less wondering if there was anything bothering them.

"I see, so that's what you'd like to know. Presently, there's no particular problem. If I am forced to say something, I would like it very much if you could increase the number of employees a little more..."

“Employees, huh. In which area exactly?”

“For the time being, the cooks. There have been many requests to be able to order and eat here.”

“Is that so... However, about cooks, they are compelled to undertake a period of training, so even if we are to hire new ones immediately, you will still have to wait a while... I will look into it right away.”

When I get home, I will make sure to look at the recent sales of this place.

“Thank you. Well then, please guide me to the room as well. From here onwards, please let me see this place as a guest.”

“I understand. Now then, please let me guide you.”

After that, I completed my inspection as a guest. There wasn’t any particular problem, so I ended it after suggesting this and that.

...Mimosa hasn’t come out even after a while... that’s what I was thinking while waiting for her. When she finally came out, she had a contented expression on her face, so she might have done quite a bit of shopping. ...Although I didn’t hear the details from her.

With that kind of feeling, today’s inspection ended. I feel a little forlorn thinking that my short visit to the Royal City is coming to an end, but I also wanted to hurry up and return to the fief...

“Thank you very much for today, Alice.”

“I would also like to thank you for today, Misha.”

...While feeling somewhat complicated, I returned to the house.

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Translator’s Message

I had such a hard time finding the right words to describe Earl Monroe’s hairstyle... I should have just left it as “weed-looking funny hairstyle that covers his ugly wrinkles.”

Chapter 43: Evening Party

In just a couple more days, my stay in the Royal City will end. Today is the day I am scheduled to visit Baron Messi's house. According to the information provided by mother, Baron Messi typically returns to his fief early when it's about to be off-seasons. Hence, the party. In other words, it is to say farewell to his associates.

The members of the First Prince's faction, who have their own fief, are devoted to land management and often stay in their fief. In other words, they don't have many opportunities to gather. On the contrary, during a season, their attendance rate is quite high.

Because it's that kind of party, is it really acceptable for me to attend...? I started having those kinds of thoughts.

In the morning, I started doing yoga for mental concentration. Beside me was mother who has completely gotten into practicing yoga and was wearing an outfit similar to mine.

"Well, Iris-chan. Your expression is looking stiff. If you keep that up, you'll get tired."

"Is that so...?"

"Yes. Since you're going through all the trouble to loosen your body, you should work on your expression as well... That's right, that's how it should be."

After I finished practicing yoga, I took a shower and changed my clothes. Since today's party will take place at night, I'm still wearing my everyday clothing.

Because there's still some time, I decided to take a look at the reports sent by Sei and Sebastian so that I can immediately send necessary instructions as a reply if needed be.

Hmmm... As I thought, location is important. Since it takes time for the letter to arrive, when I have completely grasped the situation, it might have already changed. When I consider these things, I shouldn't continue

to involve myself in any unnecessary things and quickly return to the fief.

While I was scuffling with the documents, I heard a knock coming from the door and Tanya entered the room.

“Young mistress. It is about time for you to make your preparations.”

Oh, it’s that time already? As I thought, when one is concentrated on doing something, time flies by quickly.

Because I cannot be late, I began my preparations at once. Because the party is being held at night, unlike the dresses I wore to Dranbalt and the Marquis’ mansion, I wore a dress similar to what one would wear at an official function. However, as I expected, I am not used to wearing heavy dresses, and I wore something that feels refreshing.

After Tanya finished arranging my hair, I put on some accessories. Today’s dress is dark blue in color that matches the color of my eyes. As for accessories, because my hair is silver, white will not compliment it, so blue sapphire was used instead. Hence, my dress is considerably embroidered with silver thread, making it stand out splendidly.

I finished my preparation in good time. Although the people in the world say that women take too long to prepare, but it takes even more time to put on a dress. In the first place, if someone doesn’t help, one won’t be able to put it on by themselves.

In the present condition, I rode the carriage and headed to the Baron’s residence. Fuuu, I’m feeling really nervous... In the Royal City... since the mansions of aristocrats are all in one sector, there is not much distance between our mansion and Baron Messi’s. However, because I’m feeling nervous, I feel like the distance was even shorter.

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While I was frozen stiff with tension, we arrived at Baron Messi’s mansion and greet our host, Baron Messi.

“Thank you very much for your invitation to today’s event.”

“I, as well, would like to thank you for your attendance.”

Baron Messi, as expected of someone who was once part of the military, his physical build is proportional. ...In addition, every single one of his body movements isn't coarse, but quite beautiful. He gives an impression of an attractive older man with silver-gray hair.

"Grandfather also felt regretful. To not be able to attend this gathering."

Even though grandfather wanted to attend, he couldn't make it. He said something about having official business elsewhere. Although he didn't talk about his business in full detail, he felt that it was quite regrettable. ...Well, compared to myself, grandfather has closer relations with Baron Messi.

"Please let me humbly say that I also felt extremely disappointed when I heard it. Please tell him that if another chance arises, please come by all means."

"Yes. Without fail."

After I finished greeting the host, I entered the hall and looked around. Wow, this is amazing. ...That was the first impression I had. There were many well-known figures here and there.

When it comes to aristocrats, there were many who received their title after some distinguished service. They started out as commoners, but after a meritable service, they were bestowed a title and became an aristocrat.

I have heard various names of the people who works as a bureaucrat from father. To actually see many of those famous people gathered in this place, it can't be helped if I'm astonished.

"...Lady Iris, it has been a long time since we last met."

"Oh... Earl Sagittaria, it has been a long time."

Earl Sagittaria serves this Kingdom as its Finance Minister. In plain words, he is one of father's subordinates, and I've met his acquaintance before.

If I'm not mistaken, when the Queen Dowager was still the Queen,

thanks to his abilities, the Earl received a recommendation and was appointed to his position.

Although he has the appearance of a good-natured old man right now, but to be able to handle the hard to deal with people in the Royal Castle... I don't believe he is what he appears to be.

"I did not at all expect Earl Sagittaria to make an appearance."

As someone who has an important position in the administration of the Kingdom, I didn't think that he would choose one of the Prince's side... This is my real feelings.

"Having a mere official such as myself will not make a difference in the fight for the throne."

Well, not directly, but it's not like he can say that. I'm sure that he has considerable influence... since he holds the purse strings of the Kingdom. And that is influence itself in its own way.

"However, whatever the Kingdom decides what's best for the Kingdom... it should also benefit the people. And I believe that it is the duty of the people part of the government to think about those things."

"Indeed. For you to think that way, it will definitely benefit the country."

When Earl Sagittaria heard my words, he said nothing and deepened his smile.

"Come to think of it, Lady Iris. The clothes you are wearing tonight looks quite splendid."

"Thank you very much."

"Are they also obtain from the trade with the East...?"

"Not at all. I ordered these clothes at a clothing shop in our fief."

"Is that so. The fief of Armelia is filled with many people of exceptional talents. It is also facing the sea, I'm quite envious. Refinement of salt, obtaining foreign currency from trade with other countries... because it's facing the sea, there are plenty of ways to enrich the fief. It also seems like the trade is doing favorably well considering the quantity."

“Y-yes... Well. It’s all thanks to the people.”

As expected of Sagittaria-sama. He has completely grasped the movement of each and every individual fief.

“How humble. I heard that it’s no small thanks to the instructions you’ve made, isn’t that right?”

For the time being, I responded to that question with just a smile. How should I put this, I found myself lost for words. Although my mind doesn’t feel painful, but it’s quite troublesome to be probed.

“Also, I heard that you are considerably involved in the fief’s politics. Reforming the taxation system, protecting orphans, as well as establishing a powerful security force. ...Exactly what in the world are you aiming for.”

To sum up his statement, earning foreign currency through trade, doing business in other fiefs to earn money, establishing a strong army, exactly what are you plotting? I guess that’s what he meant to ask. When I think about it now, I’m quite surprised. Be it Earl Sagittaria or someone else, they would want to take precautions.

“My only aim is to give the local people a peace of mind and a better life. To put it more finely, I want to provide a stable livelihood for them in the fief and give them a secure place to live in. That kind of target... No, it is more proper to call it an ideal. And how close I can get to achieve that ideal. However, this is something one must pursue for eternity... Thus, a ‘goal’ does not exist.”

“I see... I am exceedingly impressed. A government for the people... Even though you are still young, it seems you are already a public servant. However, please be careful. Because the remarks my lady made today, ‘a country for the people,’ might be perceived ‘baring your fangs.'”

“I am thankful for your advice.”

I have no intention of raising a revolt against the country. As a person of the Duke of Armelia’s House, I have more or less swore my allegiance to royal family.

However, I still believe that I should defend the people. Therefore, depending on the situation, the possibility of confronting the country still exist. On a final note, that last thing I said is a card I definitely do not want to play if given a choice. ...Nevertheless, I cannot say it out loud.

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Translator's Message

Formally addressing a noble's daughter:

Duke's daughter: Lady

Marquis' daughter: Lady

Earl's daughter: Lady

Viscount's daughter: Miss

Baron's daughter: Miss

Baronet's daughter: Miss

I want to move to Iris' fief... can someone show me the way?

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